



Iowa Drug Endangered Children (DEC) Response Guidelines for Law Enforcement

DRUG ENDANGERED CHILDREN are children under age 18 in homes where caregivers are dealing/using/manufacturing illegal drugs and who are exposed to the drug, drug residue, drug precursors, criminal drug activity, or are victims of drug-related child abuse and/or neglect.

A DEC CASE is a case in which a drug endangered child is discovered during a criminal investigation or during business conducted by child protective workers. Drug endangered children should be removed from caregivers who deal/use/manufacture illegal drugs. They are also potential witnesses to a criminal investigation. **DHS should be notified every time a law enforcement officer discovers a drug endangered child. Children should never be handed off to a relative or neighbor without the involvement of DHS.**

METH LAB DECONTAMINATION

1. Any child in medical distress from a fire/explosion with significant chemical exposure or burns should be transported immediately to an ER. Basic life support takes precedence over decontamination. Decontamination should be conducted ASAP, but must not delay care for an injured child.
2. In cases where significant chemical exposure occurs, and there is evidence of exposure (e.g., chemical smell, wet clothes or a chemical on clothes), remove chemical residues from children at scene by discarding clothes and providing warm shower with soap in non-threatening situation. If shower is not available at scene, dress child in clean clothes and transport to location where chemical residue removal is possible without trauma to child. Clothing worn by child should be removed at scene for disposition by law enforcement.
3. Minimize exposure to chemicals for which there is incomplete toxicity information, or if child being removed has no obvious signs of chemical contamination on them. Without real-time detection ability, significant chemical residue is still possible. In these cases:
 - a. Full and immediate decontamination is not needed, but as soon as it's safe remove clothes worn by child and give child trauma-free shower. A cloth draped over vehicle seats provides further protection.
 - b. Shower child with warm water in an area where privacy minimizes trauma. Shower may be conducted on scene or at hospital, fire station, etc.
 - c. Following shower, or if clothes are removed at scene, retain all clothes for washing, disposal or evidence, as determined by responsible agency. **Do NOT** decontaminate with baby wipes – they may spread contamination.

(See agency protocols for details!)

Call prosecutor ASAP to advise of case and questions.



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CONTACT NUMBERS

DHS Case Worker: _____

County Attorney: _____

WHEN ACCESS TO ILLICIT DRUGS IS EVIDENT

- Includes locations where illicit drugs are used or trafficked, and where children have access to drugs or drug residue.
- Remove children. **Do NOT** give children to relative or neighbor without express agreement of DHS.
- Contact DHS ASAP to arrange for transfer of children to appropriate care.
- Due to potential drug residue, do not remove clothing (other than what's worn), toys, food or drink from home.
- Determine and document whether children actually live in home. Visiting children not under care and custody of an adult living in home or in home at time of law enforcement contact may be considered victims of child abuse/neglect.
- Interview children at scene to determine:
 - Last meal, and who prepared it?
 - Last bathing, and by whom?
 - Anything bothersome in house?
 - Anyone in home smoke (if so, what)?
 - How child feels physically and mentally?
 - Siblings living in house, but not currently home?
- Investigate, document and photograph scene, for possible child endangerment prosecution. Include:
 - Location of drugs or precursor chemicals including their height/reach
 - General state of children
 - Visible evidence of children's presence
 - Children's accessibility to drugs
 - Drug residue
 - Syringes and drug paraphernalia
 - Proximity of drugs or drug hazards to children's play and sleep areas
 - Other hazards and indications of neglect
 - Access to pornography
 - Food quantity and quality
 - Sleeping conditions
 - Sanitary conditions
- (Meth labs) Document: quantity and types of chemicals present and containers (e.g., two-liter bottles); condition of home; odors and status of lab (e.g., actively cooking, drying stage, etc.); and people at scene or residing in home. Retrieve samples for forensic tests, if appropriate.
- (Meth labs) Collect and submit all required data for EPIC and/or other data systems. Notify local health department of all meth lab discoveries.
- (Meth labs) Law enforcement and DHS should work together to complete full forensic interview of children within 48 hours of removal in a child-friendly location by a professional trained in child-friendly forensic interviewing.
- Complete case report with all relevant child endangerment documentation. List children as victims and witnesses.
- Coordinate information exchange with DHS and appropriate medical providers (e.g., meth labs).

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